REPORT OF A RESEARCH VISIT
REVISITING KASEMPA DISTRICT 1978-2002

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Comments and/or observations are welcome
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INTRODUCTION

A research visit was brought to the Kasemba District, North-Western Province of Zambia from 16 October 2002 till 15 November 2002.

In this report a comparison is made with the situation of about 20/25 years ago.

The author was engaged in a rural development assistance programme in the district during 1966 till 1969 (village resettlement programme by the Ministry of Agriculture and financed by the Netherlands Development Organisation (SNV). In 1972 and 1978 the author brought extensive research visits were to the District and findings were published among others in '"Settlement Patterns and Rural Development, a Human Geographical Study of the Kaonde, Kasemba District, Zambia' RTI Amsterdam 1981 (and reprint 1991).

In 1982 a short visit was brought to the district mainly to the then operational farmers settlement schemes at Nkenyauna and Mpungu.

The research visit in 2002 was undertaken as a private initiative by the author without any further sponsoring. The facts and impressions given in this report are solely for the responsibility of the author. The comparatively short visit and the lack of own transport and research assistance limited the depth of the research and made it not possible to acquire much exact statistical data, figures given in this report are rough indicative estimations (and rounded off, to avoid the impression of accuracy).

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The main focus of the research was to pay attention to the changes in village settlement patterns in relation to agricultural activities and to carry out a longitudinal study on the performance of a small group of farmers of which indepth studies were made in 1978.

While keeping in mind that the general economic situation in Zambia deteriorated severely over the last decade (the period of structural adjustment, marketing liberalisation and withdrawal of government involvement) and considering reports and studies on other areas in Zambia, which indicate a decrease of commercial crop production levels and a return to subsistence economy in many parts of rural Zambia, the expectations under which this research visit started were very modest.

It was expected that:

a) cash crop production (of which maize was and is the main commodity) went down,

b) villages and village-groups scattered farther away from roads and centres for search of fresh soils for subsistence gardening (chitimene system),

c) a small group of fairly active small commercial farmers located in the center of the disrict maintained their position or were doing even better, leading towards a further economic and social differentiation in the district.

d) It was further expected that government initiated, and heavily donor sponsored, farmer settlement schemes went down.

It turned out that these expectations were not in every aspect correct. The present situation is more varied and diverse, there are negative aspects and great loss of investments but also positive developments of adapted and sustainable production systems.

This report will give a summary of main findings and some recommendations for future regional planning.

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and to SNV and PAG (in Lusaka) for interest in this study and in the Kasempa District to the District Governor, District Council, Senior Chief Kasempa and Government Departments (Agriculture, Education and Health) and the Mukinge Mission and Hospital for cooperation and information provided and to many farmers for the hospitality received at their homes. This report will be sent to the above mentioned and to those interested in the Kasempa District and the Kaonde people in general.

SHORT CHARACTERISTIC of the DISTRICT.
Kasempa District is a remote rural area in the North-West Province, with long communications lines to the urban areas (Copperbelt -400km; Lusaka -800km). It is a thinly populated area of 20,000sq km with 56,000 inhabitants (census 2000). The main population group living in the area are the Kaonde speaking people. The population lives in small villages as clusters of villages scattered all over the district; locations are mainly along the roads and near streams and around Kasempa Township. The township has about 9000 inhabitants, there are basic services such as government and district offices, shopping area and marketplace, hospital and health clinics, secondary schools. Extensive parts of the district possess good arable red clay soils (R1). The land is a flat plateau area (dangers for erosion are not very high), there are several rivers and numerous smaller perennial streams, with suitable black humid soils along the stream sides. There is a fairly good yearly rainfall.

In former days a large labour migration took place to the Copperbelt, now a days this is less. Some return migration of pensionary urban workers happened, but not in large numbers.

MAIN FINDINGS in COMPARISON with 20/25 YEARS AGO

POPULATION
Over this period the population doubled, from 29,000 in 1980 towards 56,000 in 2000. There is however enough room and arable land to accommodate and to provide subsistence food production to a growing local population, without a need for extensive food aid (except in years of exceptional draught and towards very vulnerable groups such as aged people and female-headed households).

In fact basic needs (ref ILO standards 1977) like food, clean water, housing, basic services such as primary education and health care within reasonable distance, and possibilities for some cash income (to buy essentials such as salt, sugar, cooking oil, soap) are met or can be reached by the entire population. This was already the case in 1978 and is the case in 2002.

INFRASTRUCTURE
The infrastructure in the District improved in various respects:
- There came a tared road from the provincial capital Solwezi to Kasempa Boma. (200km) this is a major improvement and very important for the stimulation of local economy and marketing.
- A number of feeder roads were build, which open wider areas and facilitates transport towards the Kasempa market center.
- Housing standards improved (also in the remoter parts of the district), housing structures are more permanent (kimberley and burnt brick), local storage facilities improved, and most villages are well kept and look neat.
- There is a good network of local handbucket wells (initiated and supervised by the D wash programme), although the peripheral areas are not yet fully covered.
- The number of primary schools and health centres doubled over the period, many schools are upgraded basic schools and in Kasempa center there are three secondary schools.
- Dams and weirs are constructed with the help of the Rural Investment Fund to promote irrigation for fishponds and vegetable gardening.
A substantial loss of infrastructure and investments took however place at various farming settlement schemes; workshops, staffhouses and training centres are not functioning and dilapidated, mechanical water supply systems are not working anymore, a large cattle breeding scheme is vandalised. (see further paragraph on agriculture).

ENTREPRENEURSHIP
-Kasempa township doubled in seize, and there is now a fairly large daily market, many small shops and a bus service twice a day to the provincial capital Solwezi. Compared to twenty years ago there is an increase in small local economic activities, repair shops, welding, carpentry, tailors, hair dress shops, second hand cloth market, restaurant, resthouses etc.
-Nowadays hammer mills are in operation all over the District to mill local sorghum and maize. 25 years ago there were only a few mills, mainly in Kasempa center. Today a hammer mill is found even in the remote village areas. This means that women in the village do not have to pound endlessly their staple food. In former days it was a constant sight to see women pounding, today it is seen only rarely.
-Everywhere some small stores can be found supplied, with daily essentials such as salt, sugar, cooking oil, soap, biscuits, clothes, shoes etc.
In general it can be said that there is emerging a middle class of businessmen/women.

AGRICULTURE
The FAILURE of large scale agricultural investment programmes
There is nearly nothing left of the government initiated and donor sponsored large scale farmers settlement schemes; these schemes provided a substantial maize cash production in 1980’s and early 90’s (for some years Kasempa District was the maize belt of the NW Province). Production at these schemes went down to nearly by zero (refer also appendix). A well equipped Farmers Training Centre is not functioning, a promising cattle breeding scheme is broken down, mechanical workshops are dilapidated, water windmills are not functioning.
Nearly all farmers left the schemes and settled like in older times along small perennial streams. In fact substantial investments by GRZ and foreign donors, mainly Netherlands/SNV and further NORAD, GTZ, IFAD and WB are totally lost.
The planning was too sophisticated, too much depended on mechanisation and monocropping of maize. Farmers left the schemes and stopped commercial maize cropping mainly because the increased fertilizer prices (less subsidies and credit), unreliable and late provision of inputs and the bad and not functioning water supply systems.
More over the monocropping of maize and extensive use of fertilizer caused very acid soils, to redress this situation with the application of liming is costly and laboursome.

POSITIVE DEVELOPMENTS
There is however at a low level cash crop production, spread over many villages clusters in the district, of maize (hybrid and local), groundnuts, beans, sweet potatoes, vegetables, sunflowers and some cotton.
The main subsistence staple food remained sorghum, but it was noticed that there is also an increase of cassave production for local consumption and sale.
As far as could be observed there is enough subsistence gardening for local food consumption.
Use is made of variety of garden types adapted to local circumstances (at least four different types of gardening can be distinguished, refer also appendix), and there is an increase in the use of streambed gardens and simple irrigation systems.
New and promising developments are the introduction of fishponds at various places in the district (in 1978 there were only a few fish ponds today there are around 300). This development is activated via a US Peace Corp programme and looks sustainable. New is also the introduction of cattle. The Kaonde are no cattlekeeping people. Cattle is a new thing to be learned and cared for. In 1978 there were at the most 8 farmers with oxen, today there are about 60 farmers with cattle (oxen), and many more with goats, rabbits and sometimes pigs.

In the 1960’s and 1970’s large parts of the District were infested with tsetse flies, today the sleeping sickness danger is only in the areas directly bordering the national nature reserves. The district offers enough grazing grounds for substantial growth of this sector.

SETTLEMENT PATTERN CHANGE

Compared to the 1970’s there are no major changes in the settlement pattern. In former days up till the sixties there were major movements of village clusters all over the district, by the middle of the seventies the pattern stabilised.

Over the last twenty years more population concentration took place around Kasemba Boma and in a radius of 30 km around the township and a long the tared road to Solwezi, (and the road Kalulushi/Copperbelt).

However many village clusters are still located far from the District center, in more peripheral areas.

Within the village clusters, village movements and garden changes still continue.

Often the main village is kept near a road, stream or service center and small temporary huts are built near the agricultural fields much farther away from the main village. This means that the walking distance to a service center and school is far and that children do not attend school during the main periods of agricultural activity, when the family is temporarily living near their gardenfields.

The scattered location of village clusters in the more peripheral areas of the district means also that the marketing situation is severly hampered, specifically since the market liberalisation policy. Produce for cash is offered in small quantities and at scattered locations. For private traders it is costly to collect at these far away and scattered places; when they enter these areas low prices are offered. Concentration of produce for sale has to be promoted, for instance via cooperative marketing depots. But still the cooperative movement is weak and not very well trusted by the local farmers.

An indication of permanent settlement is also the slow but increasing number of farmers who apply for a title on the land. Through a title deed on the land, which needs the consent of the local chief, land security can be obtained through a lease for 99 years. A condition is that the farmer lives on or nearby the demarcated land and actually makes the land productive.

Twenty years ago only a small number of farmers mainly concentrated around the Kasemba center applied for land demarcation. Today the number of applications increased (around 100) and applicants are spread over the whole district. This indicates intentions for permanent settlement and permanent farming also in the more remoter parts of the District.

The observed improvement of housing and well kept villages are, as well, indications for permanent settlement intentions.
SOCIAL and CULTURAL CHANGES
To following points of change tendencies in relation to society and culture were observed:
- The number of churches all over the District increased substantially. In every village
  cluster a number of churches, of various denominations, are present. Church buildings are
  well cared for and church communities are active (women clubs, agricultural activities).
- Villages are well kept and there is an increasing tendency to decorate housewalls,
  with religious and general texts.
- Traditional local music instrument and small decorated traditional seats are less present.
- People complain about more sheft from the gardens and fishponds
- There is a strong informal economy, with a lot of barter and payment in kind
- It was observed that there were less drinking and sundowner parties
- There is a change in disease patterns, as before there were many cases of sleeping sickness,
  and leprosy and not so much TB, to day there is severe TB, malaria, aids and less
  sleeping sickness and leprosy (information Mukinge hospital).
- Traditionally among the Kaonde succession takes place via matrilinear tradition,
  from the uncle to the nephew (sun of the sister). According several farmers succession
  nowadays goes to the sun. This means a change to a patrilineal system.
- Traditionally a village is moved and a house is burnt down when there occurs death and/or
  severe cases of sickness in a village. Today it is not a rule anymore to shift a village in such a
  case, and the house of a deceased person is often kept and used again.

SUMMARY
Commercial cash crop production went down, after a considerable increase in the late
eighties and early nineties, there is a return to the level of the end seventies (refer appendix).
Government and donor sponsored farmers settlement schemes collapsed. The schemes,
planned from above, did depend to much on mechanisation, outside and subsidised inputs and
pumped watersupply. Farmers left the schemes and settled according traditional patterns
along perennial streams, to continue with adapted forms of agriculture.
Large amount of investments have been lost. Large areas of potential well arable cleared and
stumped land lay unused and slowly reverse to bush again. There is however no direct danger
for soil erosion, due to the fairly flat plateau.
Subsistence gardening is doing well, there is enough space for continuation of shifting
cultivation and to accomodate a growing population. Use is made of a variety of subsistence
gardening types, traditionally kown to the people and ecological adapted. There are enough
small perennial streams to draw water and to irrigate streambed gardens.
The number of emerging commercial farmers (2-10 hect) did not grow, and remained at
about the same level as 25 years ago. There is a constant fluctuation within the group of
farmers who do better, which means that a stable group of farmers or farmers elite has not
yet emerged.
Many small scale subsistence farmers (2 hect) produce small quantities for sale, however the
quantities are small and available at very scattered locations. This causes marketing problems
and low prices.
The main village settlement pattern is still very scattered over the whole area of the district.
From the point of view of the continuation of shifting cultivation this is an optimal and
ecological acceptable situation, but from a point of view of service delivery, road
maintenance, transport lines and marketing it is a costly and inefficient situation.
Promising new developments are the introduction of cattle spread over of the whole district
and the growth of small scale irrigation systems and the increase in the number of fish ponds.
RECOMMENDATIONS

There is a need for a long term vision and a regional planning for the District. Such a plan has to take into account: a) a growing population (although growth figures might be lower) b) the continuation of subsistence agriculture (and shifting cultivation) spread all over the district for a considerable time to come, c) the gradual increase of all sorts of cash crop produce, d) the growth of the cattle sector and e) the growth of irrigation.

New developments such as the introduction of cattle, fish pond activities, small-scale cash crop production of various commodities should be promoted. There will be a need to open up more areas for agricultural activities, specifically those areas where road and perennial streams meet and to construct more feeder roads to those areas, particularly in a radius of about 30 km around Kasempa Boma and in connection with the two main roads (Solwezi/Kalulushi).

Such a system will be also an inducement to attract farmers from more remoter parts of the district and reduce the present costs of the very scattered population settlement pattern. Also a direct road connection from Kasempa Boma to, for instance, Nyoka, might open up viable areas for agriculture and grazing land and attract village groups closer to Kasempa. Consideration has to be given to the large unused cleared areas of land at the former settlement schemes. A liming programme could be initiated to start the re-use of this land, under a good crop rotation pattern. Attention and research should be given to the availability and exploitation of local lime deposits in the District.

Future growth of the cattle keeping sector can be promoted with the introduction of small scale cattle breeding schemes. Future growth of vegetable gardening for sale and fish ponds can be promoted with the further intensification of a programme for irrigation, building weirs and dams and maintaining a good system of furrows. Such a plan needs however to take into account a proper planning to avoid soil erosion and to protect valuable natural vegetation, specifically near the sources of rivers and streams.

Full attention has to be given to the various agricultural systems and garden types in use among the population (refer appendix).

Revival of the activities at the Farmers Training Centre and the establishment of nurseries at this centre is highly recommended. Association building among groups of farmers is essential to stimulate farmers cooperatives and to make arrangements for the local management of irrigation systems. This means the need for an intensive and long process of information and learning. It is recommended that cooperatives are linked with a savings component (with the establishment of credit and savings societies; NGO’s could play an important role in that respect). It is also recommended to promote local cooperative marketing depots.

There is the need for a proper commercial bank outlet in Kasempa Township (today people have to travel to Solwezi (200km) for savings, deposits, or to collect their salary). Remote rural areas such as Kasempa District need still special attention from GRZ and NGO’s, in this stage not yet everything can be left to the forces of the free market principles.

The establishment of a Cultural centre/Kaonde museum is recommended to inform coming generations of inhabitants on Kaonde cultural aspects and the history of the Kaonde and the Kasempa District. Initiatives in this respect by Senior Chief Kasempa deserve full support.
APPENDIX on some Agricultural Production aspects

Maize production.
In the early eighties maize production in Kasempa District went ahead considerably, specifically at farmers settlement schemes (refer above). Kasempa was one of the main maize producing districts in the Province. Towards the end of the eighties there were top productions, in the nineties decline started. Roughly over the years the picture is the following (in bags of 90kg):

End seventies: 10,000 bags (of which ca.50% from the settlement schemes)
End eighties / early nineties: 100,000 bags (of which over 50% from farmers schemes)
Middle nineties: 35,000 bags (production at schemes went down)
Early 2000: 12,000 bags (nearly no sales from settlement schemes)

The Farmers community
In Kasempa District there are about 9000 households, of which 1000 in Kasempa Township. It is estimated that of the 8000 rural households around 1000 households regularly produce some agricultural output for sale. Of this group about 10% (100) belong to the emerging commercial farmers with enterprises of up to 10 hec cultivated area with cashcrops. Of this group circa 60 also keep cattle. About 10 farmers of this group do have larger farms up to 25 hec cultivated area and a few of them do have a large cattle herd.

It is estimated that the number of small scale producers increased over the last 25 years. But the number of farmers with enterprises of ca. 10 hec and above remained about at the same as in 1978. In relative terms there is a decrease in number of middle level commercial farmers, because in the mean time the population doubled.

Fluctuations in the farmers community
Various farmers with enterprises above subsistence level (over 2 hec), specifically the group of larger farmers, often combine farming with other activities, such as a paid job in Kasempa, building or trading activities etc. Farmers do well for some time, but easily and suddenly stop their agricultural activities and move to other activities, or move for some time to town or elsewhere, when it is judged that opportunities are better elsewhere.

Often farmers who did have a fairly good enterprise are not properly succeeded.

From a longitudinal study (1978-2002) of a couple of farmers families, it turned out that there are often succession problems and in several cases a farming enterprise was not continued or continued at a much lower level. Mentioned factors are:
- sickness and death, there is no successor or to less energy and motivation among the remaining family to continue the farm at the same level as the initiator,
- conflict between nephews and sons about the succession of the farm and its properties
- no interest or motivation from the side of the successors to continue with the farming enterprise, preference to shift to other activities or orientation on an urban job
(Farmers who did well were able to send their children to school and to college, the next generation has no interest to continue the farm work and is oriented on a office or teaching job).
- divorce and instable family ties, often hamper the availability of enough labour force at the farm.
Garden types.
The Kaonde know traditionally four types of gardens, adapted to the environment and cultivated in different seasons. These types of gardens are still very much in use:

Mapoka- a garden directly near a stream and irrigated by hand or furrow (vegetables)
Kikobo – garden along the dambo (valley), on black humus rich clay soils (early maize and other products)
Bujimi- main staple food garden on the higher red clay soils, often farther away from the village (traditionally sorghum and finger millet gardens, today also maize and cassava).
Kingande – a small kitchen near the house/village (with some cassava, potato, tomato)

The gardens are cultivated in different seasons and deliver production the whole year round. In most gardens some form of crop rotation and intercropping is applied.

In particular the main garden-the Bujimi garden- is shifted to fresh/virgin bush soil after some years (shifting cultivation).

Produce from all these types of gardens is sold. Today the agricultural extension service is aware of this variety of production types, in former days there was too much attention only for some major cash commodities, specifically maize.

It is recommended to explore the potential of these types of gardens more intensively.